

Uniting independent brands

VOILÀ Hotel Rewards chief executive Mokhtar Ramadan explains the concept behind HMC's guest loyalty programme and tells Hotelier Middle East how independent brands can benefit

Q&A

HME What is the background to the premise behind VOILÀ and your role there? Hospitality Marketing Concepts (HMC), which was established in 1988, was and still is a pioneer in bringing value and revenue to our hotel partners. HMC has a very simple philosophy — its clients' success is its success.

Over the years, many of HMC's independent group clients have asked whether we would create and operate a points-based loyalty programme. VOILÀ Hotel Rewards is what we created in response to our clients' needs.

VOILÀ is a guest loyalty programme created for independent hotels and hotel groups, similar to concepts such as OneWorld and Star Alliance. It is a global network with the flexibility to accommodate private labelling, allowing a hotel group to build its own brand image and awareness within the VOILÀ umbrella. With VOILÀ, independent hotel groups receive the same benefits enjoyed by mega-brand reward programmes, but maintain their full operational independence.

HME Which hotel groups are currently in your portfolio?

VOILÀ has a launch portfolio of over 400 hotels, including Husa Hotels, Diagonal Hotels, and Coral Hotels and Resorts in the MENA region. We are currently engaged with other MENA groups representing approximately 50 additional hotels.

HME To what extent are the properties you represent independent?

VOILÀ participating hotels belong to a number of different business models. Some are individually owned hotels under a marketing affiliation; others are fully-owned corporate brands. The beauty of VOILÀ is that all these properties can come together without losing their own brand identity. They all share two common goals: to provide their frequent guests with value, recognition and rewards in return for their loyalty; and to leverage a global network that gives them the opportunity to compete on a level playing field with the mega-brands.



Ramadan aiming to develop a truly global footprint for the VOILÀ programme.

HME What exactly do you offer hotels?

In essence, VOILÀ levels the playing field for independent hotels. Over and over, reports, statistics, and research have shown points- or rewards-based loyalty programmes have huge positive impact on business for the mega-brands. VOILÀ is a turn-key rewards solution that removes operational barriers that have plagued the independent hotel groups. We provide all the systems, technology and support services necessary for hotels to operate participate in the rewards programme successfully.

And by uniting hotels of different brands into one global programme, VOILÀ delivers increased high-yield revenue from a new channel, lower advertising costs, world-wide exposure, on-demand marketing opportunities and, most importantly, increased profit margin.

HME Hotels that participate receive "all the systems, technology and support services necessary" — what does this entail?

The hotel-facing backbone of VOILÀ technology is the proprietary CRM application that HMC has invested substantial financial resources to develop. The VOILÀ CRM was designed for hoteliers by hoteliers and business-to-business e-commerce experts. It's a robust, web-based system that is dynamic and user-friendly.

For the participating hotels, through the VOILÀ CRM and Reservation System they can view member preferences to prepare for their arrivals, enroll new members, adjust room rates and inventory, view future reservations, build and manage e-mail campaigns, and access VOILÀ's global network database for target marketing.

The VOILÀ platform is based on the most modern and advanced technologies available; VOILÀ's CRS and PMS interfaces are based on OTA-compliant industry standard XML, while communication between each component of the VOILÀ application is implemented via web services. This means that any modern third party system can be interfaced with the VOILÀ platform, including systems such as Hotel CRS, Hotel PMS, consumer websites and any third party or proprietary CRM systems.

In addition, each participating group receives a dedicated programme-branded Member Website, where members may manage their own portfolio, manage their hotel preferences, check point balance, view special offers, make hotel reservations, and redeem rewards — all online at their leisure.

HME What future plans do you have regarding the MENA region?

Our goal is to develop VOILÀ into a programme with millions of members and a truly global footprint. In fact, the first phase target for VOILÀ Hotel Rewards is 1000 participating hotels in 60 countries, with 3.9 million members globally.

Obviously the MENA region is important to our global objectives for VOILÀ, and we are already aggressively moving forward with programme launches for Coral Hotels and Resorts and additional soon-to-be-announced groups.

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